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IDAHO TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



2004

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION REPORT

Moving into the 21st century, the Idaho Transportation Department is working to provide services and products that are: international in scope; intermodal and integrated in form; intelligent in character; and inclusive in service. The Public Transportation Division embraces these goals and continues to help expand public transportation services throughout Idaho to meet increasing demands.

This past year, work continued with the Interagency Working Group on coordinating services for the clients of the various programs including Medicaid, Older Americans Act, Vocational Rehabilitation and Welfare to Work. In addition, new partnerships were established. Working with the Department of Commerce and Labor and Regional Economic Development Offices, ITD helped develop Rideshare and Commute options to support economic development.

To deliver services more efficiently, more technology is being used. A Web site was launched in the fall of 2004 and a new Web-based reporting system is being tested that will simplify reimbursements to grantees.

Work continues with local communities and providers to promote transportation services to the general public. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds administered by the division are intended to provide the infrastructure for public transportation services including administrative, capital, operating and maintenance costs. Federal funds for operating the vehicles are limited, so service levels are dependant on funding provided by local governments, fares and donations. The Public Transportation Division continues to look for innovative ways to increase funding to expand transportation services throughout Idaho and work toward an integrated transportation infrastructure.

"We provide high quality, cost-effective transportation systems that are safe, reliable and responsive for the economical and efficient movement of people and products."

ITD Mission Statement



Mission and Focus Areas

■ Mission

To support the state transportation system by administering high quality public transportation programs offering financial and technical assistance throughout the state.

■ Vision

Safe, convenient, affordable public transportation systems that are fully coordinated and have intermodal connections available for all citizens of Idaho

To meet future public transportation needs and challenges, the Division of Public Transportation is committed to the following principles:

- Advocating for public transportation at the local, state and national level to bring necessary resources and program enhancements.
- Involving communities in transportation planning and project development.
- Providing timely internal and external customer service and technical assistance.
- Looking for appropriate services to meet community needs including demand response, fixed route or vanpool/carpool services.
- Incorporating technology and intelligent transportation systems to improve efficiency of transportation delivery.

■ Highlights of 2004

Valley Transit, the Lewiston-based regional transit provider, has been developing services in Latah and Clearwater counties. Demand response service has expanded in Moscow and a fixed-route service started in January 2004, connecting the University of Idaho campus with residential and business areas of the city. Ridership continues to exceed expectations with numbers for October showing more than 5,200 trips.

The Division of Public Transportation participated in the statewide Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) planning process in 1999-2000. Public Transportation providers described a need for electronic systems that could improve transit efficiency, such as dispatching, automatic vehicle locating and billing systems. Funding has been dedicated for Pocatello Regional Transit to purchase ITS hardware and software upgrades for its demand response and fixed-route systems. Once installed, the technology will help Pocatello Regional Transit become more efficient in dispatching, accounting, tracking and reporting for state agency and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs.

The division has a long history of working with rural communities to provide accessible vehicles to senior centers and non-profit organizations. This year, in addition to vehicles awarded to regional public transit providers, vehicles also were awarded to Minidoka Memorial Hospital, Three Island and Mountain Home senior centers, and Bannock ARC.

Program Highlight: Vehicle Management System

The division actively monitors the use and condition of public transportation vehicles purchased with state and federal funds. That combined funding makes vehicles available to transportation providers, non-profit organizations and local governments under the FTA's Section 5311 Rural Transportation Program and Idaho's Vehicle Investment Program.

The division's oversight function ensures a safe ride for clients who rely on buses, shuttles or vans to get to their destinations – whether to the grocery store or a medical appointment. Access to medical services is an area where the division's vehicle management system has made great strides. Staff identified rural hospitals providing nursing facilities and home health services as potentially needing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant vehicles. Working with these hospitals, local health services have been enhanced with the addition of ADA-compliant vehicles in southern Idaho.

Primary Focus Areas

Grant Operations

Meeting federal program and financial requirements by providing oversight and technical assistance to local grantees

Planning

Meeting federal planning requirements by participating actively in state and local planning activities to support improved public transportation systems

Coordination

Meeting federal coordination requirements by working with state and local agencies to promote coordinated public transportation systems and eliminate barriers

The goal of the division is to have ADA-compliant vehicles available to every senior center in Idaho and to supply vehicles to other agencies providing transportation to the general public or social service clients. To this end, staff routinely reviews vehicle use and contacts providers whose vehicles are nearing the end of their useful life.

Staff will continue to identify and contact local hospitals that potentially could use vehicles, and to identify non-profit organizations providing health care and training for clients with disabilities.

The division also plans to gradually reduce the number of older vehicles in service (more than 15 years old), thus reducing maintenance costs and providing reliable, accessible vehicles to rural communities.

Targeted Performance Standards

1. **Emphasis area:** Safety

Goal: To improve safety of federally funded transit operations.

Targeted performance standard: Support the development and implementation of rural transit providers' federally funded safety and security plans.

■ **Background Information**

The division administers a transit training program with funding from the Rural Transit Assistance Program, FTA Section 5311 (b) (2) (RTAP). RTAP funding is used to provide training and technical assistance projects in conjunction with the state's administration of the Section 5311 Rural Transportation Program.

Training opportunities are available for all staff of a rural transportation provider in two ways:

- Training at a provider site, and
- Training offered outside the local area and professional conferences that provide transit training.



The Idaho Transportation Department helps provide vans for public transportation in rural communities.

FTA has increased its emphasis on safety and security plans, and ITD is following suit. Staff has worked with providers to assess local needs to develop plans that address how to respond to security threats and local emergencies.

By the end of 2003, the division achieved its goal of having a majority of rural transit organizations participate in train-the-trainer classes to certify an in-house Passenger Service and Safety Certification (PASS) trainer. PASS training now can be provided to staff in each agency as needed. In 2004, training at provider sites included cost allocation/financial management, defensive driving, Web-based dispatch and reporting, CPR, PASS, and Safety and Security training follow-up. Other training included fleet management, employee performance evaluation training, and classes offered at the Community Transit Association of America annual conference.

■ **Strategic Outlook**

ITD is working with a nationally recognized transit safety and security expert to provide regional training and onsite assessments tailored to the providers' location, services, ridership and other factors. ITD will continue to provide classes including PASS training to maintain certified trainers and defensive driving classes. In addition, training will address needs identified by the FTA as part of program oversight.

2. **Emphasis area:** Efficiency

Goal: To improve operational processes.

Targeted performance standard: Continue the Interagency Working Group pilot program in the Pocatello area.

■ **Background Information**

Pocatello Regional Transit (PRT) has developed an extensive rural transportation network over the past decade, providing door-to-door transportation service to seniors and qualified disabled people. PRT serves as a model of success to the Interagency Working Group (IWG), a coalition of state and local agencies working to coordinate similar transportation services in other areas of the state.

ITD takes on a leadership role within the IWG, fostering a cooperative environment where agencies can work to provide transportation services to citizens who need them. The division provides direction and technical expertise for other budding projects like PRT.

When it was launched, the PRT pilot project served a four-county area. Service was expanded in 2004 to Caribou County with demand-response services being offered five days a week in Soda Springs, Grace and Bancroft. PRT also has a presence in Oneida County, where it provides service to the Curlew Valley area once a week.

■ **Strategic Outlook**

The division will continue its active role in the IWG, which includes representatives from Division of Medicaid, Community Transportation Association of Idaho, Commission on Aging, Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Commerce and Labor, Department of Education, Council on Developmental Disabilities, Idaho Head Start Association and the Office of the Governor. The group's mission is to provide leadership in developing coordinated, responsible and integrated public transportation systems in Idaho.

Staff will continue to provide technical support and assistance to the Pocatello project, and for other similar projects that are in development.

3. **Emphasis area:** Efficiency

Goal: To improve operational processes.

Targeted performance standard: Provide technical and administrative support for Idaho's three new metropolitan planning organizations and urban transit providers.

■ **Background Information**

The 2000 Census resulted in the designation of three new metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in Idaho: the Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston and Nampa urbanized areas. MPOs are required whenever the census bureau determines that an urban area has exceeded 50,000 in population. The designation also requires local government oversight of public transit operations.

MPOs oversee planning and federal funding for transportation projects in their jurisdiction. The public transportation and planning divisions at ITD worked in concert to help the new agencies comply with relevant state and federal regulations. Working closely with local community leaders and elected officials, staff also served as a valuable resource while the MPOs were still in development. Additionally, staff shares important insights as the MPOs mold their operations, policies and procedures.

Public transportation division staff also worked with the city of Lewiston and Kootenai County to transfer responsibility for FTA programs to local control. Division staff provided guidance for complying with FTA financial and program requirements to ensure continued federal funding.

■ **Strategic Outlook**

ITD remains a source for technical expertise to the MPOs and local public transportation providers. Staff will continue providing assistance to the local transit providers in preparation for the 2005-2006 FTA Triennial Compliance Review.



A recent study indicates a need for transit centers in the Treasure Valley to provide connectivity for commuters.

4. Emphasis area: Efficiency

Goal: To improve operational processes.

Targeted performance standard: Coordinate with other Idaho agencies to develop new ways to promote the benefits of public transportation and grant opportunities to local communities.

■ Background Information

The division administers Federal Transit Administration Section 5311 Rural Public Transportation and Section 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Programs. These funds are awarded to non-profit and local government organizations to maintain transit services in communities with populations of less than 50,000.

The long-term goal is to have general public and specialized transportation services available in all areas where rural transportation is needed. Staff works with providers and local groups to develop plans and matching funds to initiate services in new or underserved areas. The graph below illustrates the number of counties in Idaho where the division provides operating funds.

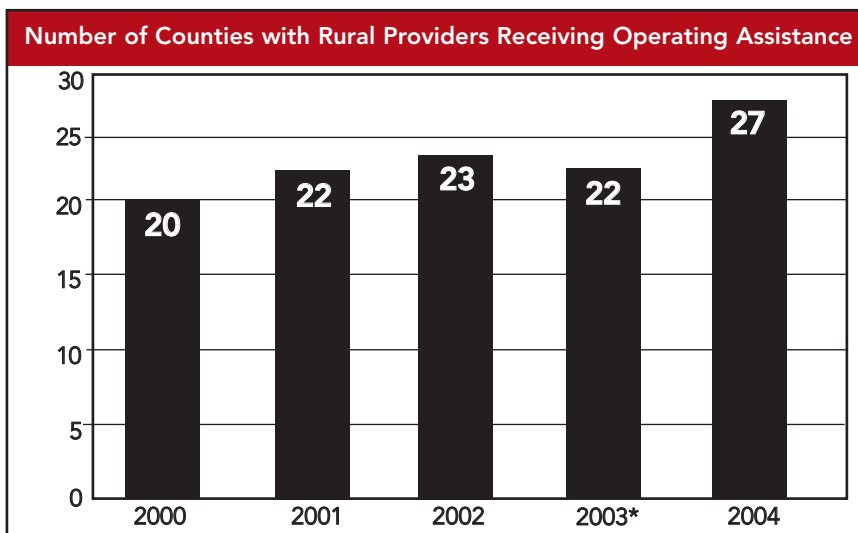
Projects are limited by the availability of federal and local funds; however, steady increases in federal funding in recent years have allowed the division to make progress in funding transit operations.

In addition to new services highlighted above, intercity service was established between Twin Falls and Burley and demand-response service was added in the Marsing vicinity of Owyhee County. Working with the Department of Commerce and Labor and Regional Economic Development Offices, the division also helped make Rideshare and Commute options available to support economic development.

■ Strategic Outlook

Based on the continued availability of federal and local funds, the division is committed to maintaining current levels of service and expanding into the remaining unserved rural areas of Idaho.

Staff continues to work on developing service for communities in the Payette/Weiser/Ontario area (in coordination with the Oregon Department of Transportation) and on developing local service in the Orofino area.



*Operating assistance for Canyon and Nez Perce Counties changed to Section 5307 Urbanized Area administered directly by ValleyRide and the City of Lewiston.

